Singular/Plural nouns

We use **singular verb forms** with:

- mass nouns: ***butter, cheese, bread, air, gold, wood*** etc. *There **is** some **butter** left in the fridge.*
- school subjects: ***maths, geography, physics*** etc. ***Physics** is my favourite subject at school.*
- games: ***football, billiards, dominoes*** etc. ***Billiards** is my favourite game.*
- diseases: ***measles, mumps, flu*** etc. ***Measles** is a terrible childhood disease.*
- some other nouns: ***news, advice, information, money, furniture, hair, homework, rubbish, jewellery, luggage*** etc. ***The furniture** in the room **is** quite old.*

We use **plural verb forms** with:

- objects consisting of two parts: **items of clothing** *(pyjamas, trousers, shorts etc)*, **tools** *(scissors, pliers etc)*, **instruments** *(binoculars, compasses etc).*
- group nouns: ***family, team, police, staff*** etc, when we mean the individuals that make up the group. However, we use singular verb forms when we refer to them as a unit. *My family **have** different ideas on certain issues.* (We mean the individual members of the family.) *Mary's family always **spends** Easter together.* (We refer to them as a unit.)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

9 Underline the correct word.

1 How many children ***is***/***are*** there in your class?
2 Some people never ***do***/***does*** any exercise.
3 There ***is***/***are*** a pair of socks under the bed.
4 His new clothes ***was***/***were*** very expensive.
5 I can't find the stairs in this building. Where ***is***/***are*** they?
6 The police ***is***/***are*** looking for the criminal.
7 I want to cut some paper. Where ***is***/***are*** the scissors?
8 Your hair ***need***/***needs*** cutting.
9 Your pyjamas ***is***/***are*** on the bed.
10 The information you gave me ***was***/***were*** very helpful.
11 There ***was***/***were*** a lot of people at the cinema last night.
12 My shorts ***is***/***are*** made of silk.
13 His shoes ***is***/***are*** too small. He needs a new pair.
14 My parents ***is***/***are*** walking the dog at the moment.
15 These earrings ***was***/***were*** given to me by my grandmother.

6 Underline the correct word.

1 A: How many biscuits ***was***/***were*** there in the tin?
B: I don't know.
2 A: These trousers ***is***/***are*** too long.
B: You must have bought the wrong size.
3 A: My hair ***is***/***are*** a mess today.
B: Don't be silly. You look lovely.
4 A: I need some new socks.
B: There ***is***/***are*** a new pair in that bag for you.
5 A: What happened to that escaped criminal?
B: The police ***is***/***are*** still looking for him.
6 A: Did you see Steve at the party?
B: No. There ***was***/***were*** too many other people there.
7 A: Do you like my new shoes?
B: Oh yes. My shoes ***is***/***are*** very similar, actually.
8 A: I can't stand people who never ***do***/***does*** anything for themselves.
B: Nor can I. No one should depend totally on others.
9 A: My shorts ***is***/***are*** dirty.
B: Well, you'll have to wear a skirt.
10 A: The stairs in the cathedral ***was***/***were*** very steep.
B: Yes. I was exhausted when I reached the top.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7 Fill in *is* or *are*.

1 Be careful! Those scissors ...*are*... very sharp.
2 Maths ..... John's favourite subject at school.
3 The police ..... investigating the crime.
4 These trousers ..... too big for me.
5 The stairs in my house ..... made of wood.
6 His new furniture ..... very modern.
7 The weather ..... going to be bad this weekend.
8 My advice ..... that you get a new job.
9 His new clothes ..... very fashionable.
10 The team ..... all training hard for Saturday's match.
11 The money in the jar ..... for this week's shopping.
12 My pyjamas ..... not on my bed. Where ..... they?
13 Mumps ..... a childhood disease.
14 My luggage ..... in the car already.
15 Your hair ..... very long again.
16 Tom's gloves ..... made of soft leather.
17 The class ..... all working on a project together.
18 Athletics ..... my favourite sport.
19 My shoes ..... too small for me now.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Sometimes we use a *plural* noun for one thing that has two parts. For example:

				
trouser**s** *(two legs)* also jean**s**/tight**s**/short**s**/pant**s**	pyjama**s** *(top and bottom)*	glass**es**	binocular**s**	scissor**s**

These words are plural, so they take a plural verb:

- My trousers **are** too long. (*not* my trousers is)

You can also use **a pair of** + these words:

- **Those are** nice **jeans**. *or* That**'s a** nice **pair of** jeans. (*not* a nice jeans)
- I need **some** new **glasses**. *or* I need **a** new **pair of** glasses.

Some nouns end in **-ics**, but are not usually plural. For example:

athletics **economics** **electronics** **gymnastics**
maths (= mathematics) **physics** **politics**

- **Gymnastics is** my favourite sport. (*not* Gymnastics are)

News is not plural (see Unit 70B):

- What time **is the news** on TV? (*not* are the news)

Some words ending in **-s** can be singular or plural. For example:

means	**a means** of transport	**many means** of transport
series	**a** television **series**	**two** television **series**
species	**a species** of bird	**200 species** of bird

Some singular nouns are often used with a plural verb. For example:

audience **committee** **company** **family** **firm** **government** **staff** **team**

These nouns are all groups of people. We often think of them as a number of people (= they), not as one thing (= it). So we often use a plural verb:

- **The government** (= they) **have decided** to increase taxes.
- **The staff** at the company (= they) **are** not happy with **their** working conditions.

In the same way, we often use a plural verb after the name of a sports team or a company:

- **Italy are** playing Brazil next Sunday (in a football match).
- **Shell have** increased the price of petrol.

A singular verb (The government **wants** ... / Shell **has** ... etc.) is also possible.

We use a plural verb with **police**:

- **The police are** investigating the crime, but **haven't** arrested anyone yet. (*not* The police is ... hasn't)

Note that we say **a police officer** / **a policeman** / **a policewoman** (*not* a police).

We do not often use the plural of **person** ('persons'). We normally use **people** (a *plural* word):

- He's **a** nice **person**. *but* They are nice **people**. (*not* nice persons)
- **Many people don't** have enough to eat. (*not* Many people doesn't)

We think of a sum of money, a period of time, a distance etc. as *one* thing. So we use a singular verb:

- **Fifty thousand pounds** (= it) **was** stolen in the robbery. (*not* were stolen)
- **Three years** (= it) **is** a long time to be without a job. (*not* Three years are)
- **Two miles isn't** very far to walk.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

79.1 **Complete each sentence using a word from Sections A or B. Sometimes you need a or some.**

1 My eyesight isn't very good. I need glasses .
2 A species is a group of animals or plants that have the same characteristics.
3 Footballers don't wear trousers when they play. They wear _____ .
4 The bicycle is _____ of transport.
5 The bicycle and the car are _____ of transport.
6 I want to cut this piece of material. I need _____ .
7 A friend of mine is writing _____ of articles for the local newspaper.
8 There are a lot of American TV _____ shown on TV in Britain.
9 While we were out walking, we saw many different _____ of bird.

79.2 **In each example the words on the left are connected with an activity (for example, a sport or an academic subject). Write the name of the activity. The beginning of the word is given.**

1 calculate algebra equation mathematics
2 government election minister p_____
3 finance trade employment e_____
4 running jumping throwing a_____
5 light heat gravity ph_____
6 exercises somersault parallel bars gy_____
7 processor silicon chip gigabyte el_____

79.3 **Choose the correct form of the verb, singular or plural. In two sentences either the singular or plural verb is possible.**

1 Gymnastics is / ~~are~~ my favourite sport. (is *is correct*)
2 The trousers you bought for me doesn't / don't fit me.
3 The police want / wants to interview two men about the robbery last week.
4 Physics was / were my best subject at school.
5 Can I borrow your scissors? Mine isn't / aren't sharp enough.
6 It's a nice place to visit. The people is / are very friendly.
7 Fortunately the news wasn't / weren't as bad as we expected.
8 Where does / do your family live?
9 I can't find my binoculars. Do you know where it is / they are?
10 Does / Do the police know how the accident happened?
11 Germany is / are playing Spain tomorrow night, but it's not on TV.
12 Most people enjoy / enjoys music.

79.4 **Most of these sentences are wrong. Correct them where necessary.**

1 Three years are a long time to be without a job. Three years is a long time
2 The government have decided to increase taxes. OK (has decided *is also correct*)
3 Susan was wearing a black jeans. _____
4 I don't like hot weather. Thirty degrees is too hot for me. _____
5 I like Martin and Jane. They're very nice persons. _____
6 Ten pounds aren't enough. I need more money than that. _____
7 I'm going to buy a new pyjama. _____
8 The committee haven't made a decision yet. _____
9 There was a police directing traffic in the street. _____
10 What is the police going to do? _____
11 This scissors isn't very sharp. _____
12 Four days isn't enough for a good holiday. _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS